

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 147

By Burchett

A RESOLUTION to honor and recognize the efforts of
Breakthrough Corporation on behalf of East
Tennessee adults with autism.

WHEREAS, autism is a lifelong disorder of the brain that in most cases severely
compromises the individual's capacity to function independently; and

WHEREAS, at this time, physicians and scientists do not know what causes autism nor
have they discovered a cure; and

WHEREAS, the incidence of autism is increasing at an epidemic rate; while the
population of the United States grew thirteen percent in the 1990s, the number of autism
diagnoses increased by a staggering 127 percent; and

WHEREAS, it is the fastest growing developmental disability, and it is more prevalent
than Down Syndrome, childhood cancer, and cystic fibrosis; perhaps as many as 1.5 million
Americans have some form of autism today; and

WHEREAS, in the nine-county Greater Knoxville area, a conservative estimate for the
number of people with autism is two thousand; and

WHEREAS, in 1999, board members of the Autism Society of America East Tennessee
Chapter (ASA-ETC) noted the alarming lack of services for adults with autism in their area; and

WHEREAS, out of their concern, Breakthrough Corporation was born; Breakthrough
offers a variety of services that foster independence, close family ties, and community
involvement for adults with autism; and

WHEREAS, in their efforts to improve the lives of autistic adults, Breakthrough
Corporation strives to provide nurturing and cost-effective housing options, as well as personal
fulfillment through education and training, meaningful work, and leisure activities; and

WHEREAS, Breakthrough Corporation also coordinates learning partnerships with local institutes of higher education, training for family members and professionals, and support to caregivers; and

WHEREAS, in order to realize its ambitious goals, Breakthrough sponsors an annual Ribbon Run and has recently initiated a capital campaign that will allow the organization not only to maintain its current programs but also to renovate its current facility and fund its supported living homes, which are set to open soon thanks to construction funds acquired through the Department of Housing and Urban Development; and

WHEREAS, many area volunteers and professionals contribute their time and energy to Breakthrough Corporation; its Board of Directors includes Co-chair Judith Brookshire, Co-chair Elizabeth Ann Ritchie, Treasurer Richard Norris, Jr., Secretary Susan Lee, Nancy Carnes, Denzel Dukes, Diana Gossett, John Lawrence, Johnnie Morgan, Terry Ray, and John Thomas; and

WHEREAS, the Breakthrough Advisory Council includes Dr. Andrew Zimmerman, Dr. Brian Bonfardin, Rev. George Doeblor, Dr. Gene Hayes, George Kershaw, and Elisabeth Rukeyser; and

WHEREAS, thanks to these board members and advisers, as well as many others who give graciously of themselves, the lives of autistic adults in the Knoxville area are richer, safer, and more rewarding; and

WHEREAS, Breakthrough Corporation has become a model of community service, and its staff and volunteers have proven themselves unmatched in their concern for their fellow human beings; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and commend the dedicated people of Breakthrough Corporation, thank them for all they have done to improve the lives of autistic adults in the Greater Knoxville area, and wish them every success in their future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.